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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000321

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2033

TAGS: PGOV PINR KISL NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SHIA LEADER IMPLICATES U.S. IN SUNNI
IMAM'S KILLING

REF: A. 07 ABUJA 2205

1B. 07 ABUJA 1630

1C. TD-314/77020-07

1D. TD-314/011187-08

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for Reasons 1.4 (b,
c & d).

11. (S//NF) SUMMARY: Sokoto state Attorney General Inuwa Abdul-Qadir (strictly protect) informed that the secret trial of prominent Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) leader Kasimu Tawaye and over a hundred other members of Sokoto's minority Shia community remains stalled several months after the accused were arraigned for the July murder of outspoken Sunni imam Umaru Dan-Maishiya. Neither the police nor the State Security Services (SSS) has submitted the majority of their evidence to court, and only one individual has been charged with Dan-Maishiya's murder. Amidst the detention of Tawaye, et al., IMN leaders, including founder Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, have proffered through readily accessible audio cassette that the United States orchestrated Dan-Maishiya's murder to foment Sunni-Shia discord in Nigeria. Under threat from the Nigerian government, and owing to widespread disaffection towards IMN's ideology by broad segments of the North's lay and clerical populations, IMN is making concerted efforts to recast itself as constituent element of the Nigerian Islamic community. END SUMMARY.

12. (S//NF) Inuwa Abdul-Qadir (strictly protect), Sokoto state Attorney General (AG), spoke to PolOff February 13 regarding the status of the detention of Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) leader Kasimu Tawaye and 112 other members of Sokoto's minority Shia community (Ref A). While Tawaye and the others arrested in connection with the July 18 killing of outspoken Sunni scholar Umaru Hamza Dan-Maishiya remain in prison (Ref B, also for background on Shi'ism in Nigeria), only one individual has been charged in Dan-Maishiya's murder. All of the accused have pled not guilty to murder charges, and most have pled no contest to charges of illegal assembly at Dan-Maishiya's mosque (on the day of his assassination). Abdul-Qadir said the State Security Services (SSS) and Nigerian police have yet to remit the majority of their evidence, which they assure directly links the accused (especially Tawaye) to Dan-Maishiya's homicide. The Attorney General admitted to PolOff that while the scant evidence in the court's possession may be circumstantial, it is sufficient to indict Tawaye and the others and "send a message" to the rest of the Shia community in Sokoto (and

beyond) that their presence is a "nuisance" and will not be tolerated. (PolOff broached the issue of Sokoto's Shia community with Sokoto-based academics and technocrats January 26 and received indication that antipathy for Shia doctrine far overshadowed any concern these individuals may harbor for the maltreatment of the Shia community by the government.)

¶3. (S//NF) Subsequent detainee interrogations, AG Abdul-Qadir disclosed, revealed plots by the Shia community in Sokoto and Nigeria writ large to "attack" systematically similarly outspoken Sunni scholars in Kebbi, Bauchi, and Kano states. Also, Abdul-Qadir confirmed the Sokoto state government completed its scheduled demolition of the presumed headquarters (known as the markaz) of the Sokoto Shia community. Abdul-Qadir asserted the markaz compound's proximity to a densely-populated Sunni area of Sokoto city characterized it as a threat to public safety. Therefore, under the authority of the Land Use Act, several homes belonging to declared IMN members were also razed.

¶4. (S//NF) Following the detention of Tawaye and his associates, AG Abdul-Qadir said on October 20, five Shia men shot and mortally wounded a Sunni resident (Aliyu Mallam) near the group's alleged markaz. Abdul-Qadir confirmed that of the five, two had been apprehended, one killed, and two others had fled the city toward Zamfara state. Customs officials on the Sokoto-Zamfara road apprehended one of them and his vehicle; however, the shooter (and alleged mastermind) in the attack remains at large. Abdul-Qadir said the Nigerian police recovered a national identity card in the vehicle, which officials believe belongs to the brother of the alleged shooter. Subsequently, the police arrested and charged the shooter's brother as an accessory to murder.

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(See Ref C for additional information.)

¶5. (S//NF) Abdul-Qadir noted the SSS arrested an undisclosed number of individuals in Sokoto who attempted to demonstrate January 19 in commemoration of Ashura (the Shia holiday which honors the martyrdom of Imam Ali's family). Abdul-Qadir informed PolOff that the Sokoto marketplace is full of Hausa audio cassettes, in which IMN founder Ibrahim al-Zakzaky directly implicates the United States in the attack against Dan-Maishiya, extols the virtues of Shi'ism and the Iranian government, and decries the United States for exacerbating tensions between the Sunni and Shia communities in Nigeria. In addition, several prominent imams from within the Sunni community in the North have told PolOff of their concern over the growth of Shi'ism in Nigeria. (See Ref D for additional information.)

¶6. (S//NF) COMMENT: As Post predicted (Ref A), the authorities are using the killing of Dan-Maishiya as a pretext for a likely counterproductive crackdown on the Shia presence in Sokoto. This crackdown precipitated a violent Shia response (see para. 4 above), and may be a precursor for future retribution. Clandestine reporting suggests that IMN-affiliated members may be growing in number and force, and that IMN training camps exist in the North. However, Post has not discerned a burgeoning, much less significant threat of Shia-inspired militancy. Post avers that the IMN is not a cohesive entity, but rather a fractious cadre of, ostensibly, fewer than a thousand individuals.

¶7. (S//NF) COMMENT CONT,D: Al-Zakzaky's diatribe against the United States is unsurprising, yet sobering. It illustrates an almost obdurate contention, which has widespread currency in the North, that the United States remains hostile to Muslim communities around the world, and that it is somehow behind these acts against Muslims here. Al-Zakzaky's invective against the United States may be seized upon by individuals already critical of the U.S., but Post believes most northerners will discredit the statements as little more than posturing. At the same time, IMN members continue their efforts to recast the Shia community as an

intrinsic element of the Nigerian Islamic community in order to curry sympathy, deflect criticism, and unite Sunni and Shia against what the latter see as a common foe, the U.S.

END COMMENT.

SANDERS